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INAUGURAL OF PRESIDENT BARROWS

[Tuesday, October 1, 1901.]

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Pioneer Society:

In assuming the duties of president for the current year of the society's existence, I desire, first of all, to express my thanks and appreciation of the honor that has been conferred on me by my election as the presiding officer of this honorable body.

For, I assure you, that, though the duties of the office, if properly and faithfully performed, are somewhat onerous, and would seem to require the services of a younger and more active man than I am; nevertheless, the honor that attaches to the position is one that any member might be justified in coveting.

And, in this connection, I cannot forbear remarking that, in my opinion—in which I am sure you will all concur—much of the prosperity and success of our society have been the result of the faithful and active work of our associate, who, during the last three years, has served as your presiding officer. If I can serve you anywhere near as well, during the next one year, I shall be content.

I have thought that the present is a fitting occasion on which to offer some observations concerning the aim and scope of our Pioneer Society, and to suggest the best means, so far as I may, of realizing the same.

Our society has come to seem like one large family, bound together by strong ties analogous to those which bind together an ordinary family. Our bond of union extends back 25 years or more—and in some cases, 30, 40 and 50 years—to times when we were neighbors, and more or less intimate friends—or perhaps even only distant acquaintances—in a community and amidst surroundings in many respects vastly different from those in which we now live. For, probably in few cities in the United States, have such great changes occurred as in Los Angeles during the same period of time.

When, as a large family of former neighbors, we meet; or when we meet each other on the street or elsewhere, we instinctively are reminded of former times and of a former world, in which we—each one of us—were actors, and of scenes and associations with companions and dear friends or near relatives,

who long ago passed away, leaving to us, now reduced to a comparatively small band, the privilege of cherishing their memory, and of living over again a former life, which then was in fact so real, but which now almost seems like a dream.

It is indeed a source of genuine pleasure, in these, our monthly meetings, to renew and cultivate our acquaintanceship of former years, and to learn to know each other better and better as the end of life's drama for each of us draws near.

Only a few days ago I met an old friend (Col. I. E. Messmore), and an old man—though he is not a member of our society—who stopped and saluted me, saying, "Whenever I see you, I have a kindly feeling towards you and desire to extend a friendly greeting." The cordial, and, as I believed, entirely sincere manner in which he said this, gave me great pleasure; and I instantly responded, and with perfect truth: "That's exactly the way I feel towards you."

In the renewal, in this society, of our old acquaintanceship, we have come to have, more and more, a "kindly feeling" for each other. Let us, in every way we can, encourage and stimulate that friendly feeling.

And one of many ways in which this can be done is by giving more time at our monthly gatherings to informal social intercourse. This can be done without changing the regular time of 8 o'clock for our formal opening, by having it generally understood that, if members will get together an hour earlier—say at 7 o'clock—that much time can be devoted to social intercourse, in talking over "old times" as well as present times, and matters of present current interest, etc.; and then we can commence the formal or regular business of the evening promptly at 8 o'clock, and dispatch it without running far into the night, which, I think, would be satisfactory to all our members. This innovation can easily be adopted, as the evenings in the winter season are long.

I am moved to offer this suggestion, as I have often noted the great interest with which members engage in conversation before each meeting, sometimes delaying the call to order from one-half to three-quarters of an hour. Instead of repressing this desire of members "to talk over old times" informally, I think their wish in the matter is entirely commendable, and should be encouraged, as it can be by the plan I suggest, and that without interfering at all with our regular programs.

I desire to repeat tonight what I have often urged before, namely, the desirability of this Pioneer Society's possessing, in

writing, either briefly or in extenso, a sketch of the life of every one of its members. We have already a record in the "Pioneer Register" of the dates of the births and coming to California of each member. But those primary facts should be supplemented by some details, long or short, and in writing, for preservation for the benefit of those who come after us, of the life of every member. Some members have recounted to us verbally, stirring episodes of their lives, which were of exceeding interest, but which, as they were not of record, will not be available for their and our children, unless they shall yet be written, out. The recorded story of the principal events of every member of this society, if preserved, will be of inestimable value. And I earnestly hope the society will yet, and at no distant day, possess such a record, as it may, if each member who has not already done so, will furnish the same, so far as it refers to his own individual life.

The last half of the nineteenth century in Southern California—in Los Angeles county—was certainly, as we all of us well know, an exceedingly interesting and eventful period. Let us all contribute what we can to preserve the memory of the life we have lived here in the olden times, and which we know more intimately than any outsider can know.